interviews that were unfiltered and unfettered by the presence of an adult, even an interviewer. Further, children were given diverse ways of expressing themselves from using cameras to creating drawings and collages to writing mini essays. Finally, the methodology used an archetypal framework to uncover common perspectives among the children.

C. Panel Discussion

A forum took place at the National Press Club on February 25th, 2003, unveiling the findings from the third phase of the research. The session was moderated by Dr. Ellen Wartella, the Dean of the College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin. The forum consisted of a presentation of the findings followed by a panel discussion among academic experts and three child panelists, the latter whom were also participants in the focus group. The academic panelists included (Please see biographies in Appendix A):

- Dr. Albert Roberts, Chairman Department of Psychology, Howard University
- Dr. Nora Alarifi Pharaon, Gramercy Park Counseling Center
- Dr. Woodie Kessel Deputy Director for Medical and Health Science Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
- Dr. Kyle Pruett, Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry and Nursing Yale Child Study Center and School of Medicine

Three of the children who had participated in the focus group of older children served on the panel as well:

- Alejandro, 13-year-old boy who likes football and basketball
- Isobel, 11-year-old girl who likes sports, reading and literature
- Nada, 13-year-old girl who likes basketball and is a graduate of D.A.R.E

II. Progress Towards Goals

The study revealed both anticipated and unanticipated findings. In particular, it became clear from our research that 1) adults must pay extra attention to how children are coping with fears and tragedy; 2) exposure to the news seems to magnify kids' preoccupation with violence, especially in situations void of the comfort or intervention of caring adults; and 3) all children are as concerned about the environment as they are with violence, which suggests that we need to pay attention to children's' worries about the more subtle aspects of their safety, not necessarily the more visually salient concerns about crime, violence and terrorism.

A. Do children remain actively aware of the events on 9/11?

We were not surprised to learn that immediately after the tragedy of September 11th, all of the children, even the younger children, were painfully aware of the related events. In June 2002, nine months after the attack, some children still seemed overtly preoccupied with 9/11, but far fewer than was seen in September 2001. The percentage of children mentioning the events of 9/11 dropped from 39% immediately following the tragedy to 17%, nine months later (please see Appendix B).

General Population of Children Studied
Since 9/11, children seem to have responded to the positive influence of home, intimacy, and to the wisdom of grandparents. For example, in both the September 2001 and May 2002 studies, the majority of children nine, ten and eleven years old mentioned the home as their "Safe Place". Interestingly, the children in the May 2002 study were more likely to mention that the reason they picked the home as the "Safe Place" is because it is where the family keeps them safe. It seems for these children that it is not so much about the bricks and mortar as it is about he people who are in the home with them (please see Appendix C).

In the wake of 9/11, grandparents began to loom larger in children's lives, especially as sources of wisdom. Qualitatively, it also seemed that older people in general have taken on increased importance. Nine months after 9/11, twice as many children between 9 and 11 years of age mentioned grandparents as the Wise Ones in their lives (please see Appendix D).

While anxiety about the attacks had abated since the immediate aftermath of 9/11, children seemed to have retained an increased sense of patriotism. Interestingly, patriotism in May 2002 was seen as a source of pride, not as a source of hope, as had been the case right after the event. Further, similar to the weeks immediately after 9/11, children associated patriotism with community and caring. They also strongly focused on the importance of freedom (please see Appendix E).

Arab American Children
In many respects, the view of Arab-American children mirrors that of other children. They value the role of family in their lives and exhibit strong patriotic values. Also like other children in the study, almost half of the Arab-American kids mentioned a concern or fear of guns, death and violence. While the absolute levels were the same, however, Arab-American children's expressions regarding generic violence were more graphic and more personal (please see Appendix F).

The Arab-American experts we consulted during the analysis were not surprised by this finding. They noted that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Arab-American children were not allowed to venture outside. Further, many were kept home from school and were exposed to more media coverage of the event. In contrast, other children across the country were encouraged to connect with others by going out into their communities to light candles or volunteer. The isolation of the Arab-American children most likely led to an increase in the fears of personal safety for both themselves and for their families. Dr. Nora Alarifi Pharaon, a Senior Consulting Psychologist at the Arab America Family Support Center in Brooklyn, NY, elaborated on this finding. Dr. Pharaon indicated that bullying is of particular concern among Arab-American children. The events of 9/11 brought forth considerable backlash on the Arab-American community. The outpouring of support for America reinforced the notion of "us-versus-them", or Arab-American's versus other Americans. Daily events are the source of stress among Arab-American children. They are bullied, harassed, and made fun of, more so now than ever before.

Interestingly, the Arab-American children's concerns about violence were "sourced" differently than those of the general sample. For Arab-American kids, the violence they fear also causes them shame. Again Dr. Pharoan shed light on this finding explaining that the Arab culture sees acts of violence as both a disgrace to the individual and a disgrace to the Arab community as a whole. **She remarked that these data are the**

first she has seen that illustrate the power and influence of this cultural belief on Arab children.

Findings from the sorting tasks suggest that non Arab children do not harbor ill will toward their Arab counterparts. The data suggests that children in this age group for the most part do not have enough exposure to Arab American children and therefore, have little information upon which to rate them on the criteria given.

B. Are their fears different from what they were in the two earlier phases of the study?

Children seem to have retained more positive feelings eight months after 9/11 than anxious ones. They appear to have benefited from the attention of adults, the proximity of loved ones and the "balance" of negative and positive imagery in the media. The most startling finding of this study is not related to 9/11, but how children experience "business as usual." Children's fears were most widespread and dramatic at a time that adults would describe as relatively peaceful. Eight months after the 9/11 tragedy, children expressed less preoccupation with violence than they did two years earlier.

This major finding is evident by comparing all three phases of the study. In May of 2000, children were more anxious and vulnerable than they were right after 9/11 and then 8 months post-9/11. Though this finding is counterintuitive, Dr. Pruett points to the way the mental health community responded to the events of 9/11 compared to the way they responded to the events of Columbine and other school shootings. There was a much greater outpouring of mental health, counseling, and support services after 9/11 than there was after Columbine. In many ways, children may have found the events of Columbine to be even more frightening than the events of 9/11. Dr. Pruett noted that Columbine horrified the adults, but attacked the kids. The findings reinforce the notion that the lingering effects of particular events on children are sometimes invisible to adults. **Therefore, adults must pay extra attention to how children are coping with fears and tragedy.**

Sesame Workshop's unique research design both allowed children to express their delights and to convey the types of events and situations that frighten and worry them. Dr. Pruett discussed how the findings reflect a mental health crisis indicating an overwhelming fear of violence. One child panelist noted that kids are not simply scared of death or dying, they are afraid of dying in a violent way and in a way that they have no control over. Another child agreed, indicating that kids are fearful of people being shot at randomly as they are doing their everyday things like walking down the street. He noted that he still has friends who are fearful of leaving the house.

Another major concern of children today is bullying. Bullying, according to the child panelists, included both physical and mental abuse such as gossip and back-biting. One child panelist discussed the physical bullying in his school, and one of the girls discussed the emotional type of bullying that occurs in her school. She noted that kids are mean to other kids for a variety of reasons.

The children's sense of bullying is consistent with national data regarding children's concerns. According to Dr. Pruett's account of a large survey of kids in middle school, bullying is the number one concern for children in middle school today. Even younger children are affected by bullying. Dr. Pruett told a story of a little boy in his child's

preschool who brought duct-tape to school and refused to part with it. The reason that the little boy held on so dearly to the duct-tape is that he heard that it would protect him and he wanted to be shielded from another child in the preschool who teases him.

Further, exposure to the news seems to magnify kids' preoccupation with violence, especially in situations void of the comfort or intervention of caring adults. Children we spoke to complained that they see graphic news images even when they are watching programs that are intended for children and families, and assumed to be innocuous. One child panelists noted that there were frightening pop-up news advertisements about what is coming up later on the broadcast that come without warning. She noted that the pop-up ad is often the "worst part" of the later news broadcast, and that it is likely there to draw in viewers.

C. Are they optimistic about their futures?

In general, since 9/11, children seemed to have feelings of optimism buoyed by strong feelings of community and family. Children's responses suggest that home and family serve increasingly as safe harbors. For example, home is cited by 87% of children as the safe place in 2002. Interestingly, it is not just the bricks and mortar of home but importantly the people inside that provide this feeling of safety. In many children's books, a physical closeness with family members is noted and appreciated.

Children also are optimistic about various aspects of their future and they see schools and jobs as critical for success, and education as a vehicle to a better life. They also are hopeful for a happy future full of love and friends, family and good times. Whereas "America" served as a symbol of such success right after 9/11, children now name the privileges of living in America as vehicles to a successful future. While there were certainly some children who remained worried about violence a year after 9/11, a similar proportion remained concerned about the well-being of the environment. **Throughout all waves, children were concerned about pollution which suggests that we need to pay attention to their worries about the more subtle aspects of their safety, not necessarily the more visually salient concerns about crime, violence and terrorism.** However, such fears did not deter children from feeling optimistic about the present and the future. Children clearly saw many avenues to having an enriching and fulfilling life.

D. Has the sense of community they perceived just after 9/11 remained in force?

Although this question was not asked directly, we get a sense from responses to a number of different questions that, in fact, the sense of community unity is no longer felt to the same degree as it was right after 9/11. There was a peak in the number of children who mentioned local and community members as heroes immediately after 9/11, but that number decreased to numbers similar to those in 2000. Also, mentions of America and patriotism as sources of pride declined from 2001 to 2002. When asked where the "Safe Place" was, children were more likely to see diverse places around their communities such as school and houses of worship right after 9/11, compared to 2000 and 2002. In all waves, the majority of children saw the "Safe Place" as the home, however, suggesting that children find "community" and "care" within their home.

E. Has their view of the world changed?

In many ways, children of the post 9-11 world are no different than children in 2000. Education, family, and the environment are still important; they are still concerned about grades, money, and their neighborhoods. They still enjoy music, movies, TV, and sports. However, there also remains a lingering nervousness about 9/11 and the threat of terrorism that we clearly did not see before 9/11. Some children do remain preoccupied and fearful with the horrific events of 9/11, fearing that such atrocities might occur at random again. The numbers of children, however, with specific fears about terrorism are few. For most children, life seems pretty much back to "normal." Pride in America and what she stands for is cemented in children's minds as something that brings them hope, but the daily joys and struggles of being a child in elementary school is at the forefront of children's minds, and this is very similar to the state of children before 9/11.

F. Who are their heroes/role models now?

A common belief is that children see media figures as role-models. Our data suggests that in fact, it is family members who are more likely to be considered role-models compared to any other group (i.e. media figures, friends, neighbors). Almost half the children across all three waves who filled out "Kids View" (i.e. the older children) took a picture of someone in their nuclear family in response to who they see as a hero. The numbers remained steady for family members. The numbers that changed across time were the degree to which national figures and local figures were seen as heroes. In the first wave, eleven percent of children named national and world public figures, but the majority of was made up of actors, musicians, and other pop-culture icons. In the first wave, 14 percent of the children named local public figures (teachers, police, fire-fighters) as their heroes. Immediately after 9/11, 23 percent of the heroes named were local public figures (teachers, police, fire fighters) and almost no children named national public figures. In the third wave, local public figures as role models declined to 18 percent. The events of 9/11 prompted an increase in respect and admiration for public figures in the community, and that number decreased in the year following the tragedy. Perhaps, the type of support that communities gave each other in the month immediately following 9/11 encouraged children to respect and admire those in their community. It appears that without the outpouring of support, the sense of community that children felt after 9/11 has diminished. In any case, children clearly saw their immediate and extended family members as heroes throughout all waves.

G. Do they remain interested in helping people?

A gauge of children's sense of responsibility and duty towards others may depend on how it is asked. When we asked children to name the one wish that would make their life better, less than 10% at all waves said that they would wish for a better world. When children were asked about the secret powers they wished they possessed, about one third of children at waves 1 and 2 mentioned that they wished they had that secret power so that they could help people. By the third wave, a little less than one quarter of the children said they wanted a secret power to help people. Although such findings might suggest that children want special powers for selfish reasons, it could be that children generally feel that they are able to help others using their own human efforts.

For example, we asked children to describe a time when they were helpful to someone. Throughout all waves children named a variety of ways in which they helped other people and were more apt to say that they helped other children than adults. Helping

took place in many contexts: in sports, with homework, with chores, babysitting, helping a child tie his or her shoe. Although less frequent, children also mentioned times when they were helpful to those who were hurt or in distress. Helping others seems to be something with which children have experience and are able to do daily in small ways. To them, helping others does not constitute solving the grave and grandiose world's problems over which they have little control. Instead, helping is an activity in which they can participate.

H. Summarize your achievements

This research initiative has provided the Workshop and others with an important perspective on the world around us. The methodology is unique and serves as a model for ethnographic research among this young age group. The qualitative nature of the findings compliments other quantitative survey data on children's attitudes and behaviors. The study design provides children with an effective way to express themselves. Through the use of photography, artwork and essays, and an environment independent of an adult voice, children had a vehicle to communicate what was on their mind and how they felt about the world around them. In turn, we gained an in-depth understanding of the importance of grandparents in their lives, fears and worries about violence and death, the strong pull and influence of pop culture, and other factors impacting on children in the middle years.

Further, the academic experts were enthusiastic about the research design of the three research studies. Dr. Roberts commented that the research is an outstanding contribution to our knowledge base of children, age six to eleven, and serves as a springboard for further study. He noted that the studies highlight the importance of looking at qualitative differences, and not solely statistically significant ones. Dr. Pruett agreed, indicating that there is an authenticity in this research. The unique approach allows us to understand children's own world-view in ways that other types of research designs might not capture. Dr. Kessel noted that the studies demonstrate the power of the sample size of one and commented that this study highlights the importance of one life, one event, and how one person can make a difference in all of our lives. He also noted the importance of context in understanding a child's experiences. Dr. Pharaon noted the importance of studying six to eleven year-olds as this group is often ignored, even though there are critical developmental changes that occur during this time. Dr. Pruett notes that there are multiple ways of figuring out phenomenon and that what is needed is both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data informs qualitative data, which teaches us the right questions to ask. What convinces practitioners, researchers, and the public of the legitimacy of a particular finding is evidence from multiple methods.

I. Unexpected Outcomes

In each of the three waves, the study design and methodology exceeded our expectations and provided a number of unanticipated outcomes in terms of understanding how children see the world around them. From the standpoint of implementation, the study was well received by the research field. We received many positive comments from the interviewers stating that the methodology was not only well designed and thought out, but it was also interesting to implement. Having the field interested in the study helped to ensure that recruitment and study completion was timely and thorough.

There was one unexpected outcome in the field which we encountered when recruiting for the Arab-American sample of children. We were cautioned by our advisors and by community leaders in Dearborn that we might meet with some resistance to the study by some parents. They explained that even after eight months, Arab concern over 9/11 "profiling" was still very salient. Consequently, there was real concern about divulging personal information among the Arab-American community. This was indeed evident when we were fielding the study. Recruiting Arab-American children in the three markets was a slow and tedious process. Parents, as predicted, were reluctant to have their children interviewed and photographed. We attempted to counter this reluctance by recruiting children in Arab locales such as Mosques and Arab schools. This, however, failed in that it made the Arab-American parent feel even more singled out. By recruiting in the mall, Arab American parents felt that they were being recruited and interviewed like any other parent, not just because they were Arab. Nonetheless, field time for this sub sample was greatly extended vis-à-vis the general sample.

J. Relationships with other organizations

Our relationships with Arab-American community leaders proved invaluable as we extended the study to include a sample of Arab-American children. Members of ACCESS in Dearborn, Michigan, and community advocates in northern New Jersey were helpful in advising us on sample design and study implementation (as noted above). Further, community leaders made suggestions of Arab developmental psychologists and researchers that we could tap into for consultation regarding data interpretation and analysis. Without having formed relationships with leaders in Dearborn and New Jersey, our analysis from studying this important group of children would not have been as insightful.

The input from the academic advisors, who were called at several phases of the study initiative, was critical. Careful consideration was given to the selection of these experts to ensure that we would benefit from a breadth and depth of experience. Input from these experts included:

- Design of an analytical plan
- Interpretation of results
- Validation of findings with other existing research
- Development of implications and recommended action to be taken

A group of experts was gathered to help investigate the analysis of the data, interpret the children's booklets, and form implications of the learning. (Biographies of the expert panel members are attached as Appendix G.) The panel members included:

- Dr. Kristine J. Ajrouch, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Eastern Michigan University and Adjunct Assistant Research Scientist in the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan.
- Dr. Sherryl Browne Graves, Professor and Department Chairperson, Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling Programs, Hunter College
- Dr. Faith Rogow, President, Alliance for a Media Literate America

- Mehdi Eliefifi, Co-founder of All God's People Interfaith organization and Director of Outreach and Communication's, ICPC
- Dr. Kyle Pruett, Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry and Nursing Yale Child Study Center and School of Medicine

III. Future Plans

This research initiative has provided the Workshop and others with a window into the hearts and minds of children in the United States. The methodology utilized in this research has proven to be a powerful tool to allow children of this age group to express themselves, importantly in a way that is unfiltered and unfettered by adults in their lives. The research has helped us understand children over a two year time frame during a volatile and unprecedented time in this country.

This learning serves to highlight many opportunities for Sesame Workshop to address needs relevant to the healthy development and education of children in the middle years. In turn, the findings are invaluable to help shape these opportunities and to optimize the development of relevant initiatives.

For example, the data contains many insights into children's perceptions of themselves and the world around them. We intend to look at patterns of how children describe the things they like about themselves and that which they want to improve. Such information could inform character development. By assessing children's worries and concerns, we can develop realistic and imperfect characters that have those same worries and concerns. We can also provide those characters with coping strategies and avenues to express their concerns in healthy ways. As children are more attentive to characters that are "like them," we could help children learn from such characters who handle situations and their stress in pro-social and healthy ways. Furthermore, we can develop storylines that resonate with children by examining the kinds of themes and patterns that are prevalent in children's likes, the reality of their lives, and their wishes for the future.

As we look to expand the reach of our media properties beyond the U.S. to the international arena, we look at this research tool as an invaluable resource to learn about children, how they see their world and what needs are imperative that we address.

Because of the acclaimed success of this methodology, we recognize that there is tremendous potential in matching this learning with similar information on children in other areas of the world. Assessing the similarities—and the differences—exhibited by other children ages six to eleven, will unquestionably facilitate pathways to develop programs that assist children worldwide in learning to understand each other. This crucial information can best be obtained by utilizing the proven methodology developed for the U.S. studies and then conducting this research internationally as a vehicle to learn about how children see their world.

Given the world's many areas of conflict, we are now exploring the idea of conducting an international study of six to eleven year-olds to help understand the impact of conflict in children's' day to day lives. This understanding will help us to design media projects intended to support children, particularly in the areas of conflict resolution and modeling mutual respect and understanding.

Sesame Workshop Projects
In direct response to the findings, we have created several educational outreach projects to address the needs of children in this age group.

- This summer we launched a local multiple media campaign entitled, *You Can Ask!* to help children, ages 3 – 8, communicate their feelings and to provide caregivers with resources to guide and support them. *You Can Ask!* consists of multi-lingual video, print and on-line materials. The video features four Sesame Street segments using the subjects of fear, loss, bias and bullying to facilitate dialogue. The web site provides additional materials and activities for caregivers and children. Sesame Workshop is now seeking funding to make *You Can Ask!* available to children, caregivers and families across the country.

- Our findings from the *You Can Ask!* Advisory Panel helped us to write Public Service Announcement (PSA's) when the war in Iraq began. We produced three PSA's – two adult driven and one child-driven – and sent them out to all the networks, cable stations and PBS stations with an authorization to run it indefinitely. Segments were also broadcast in Wal-Mart stores because many Wal-Mart shoppers have spouses in the army.

- *Sesame Neighborhood* is a television program that will help promote respect and understanding of different cultures living in the United States. The pilot project will take place in Dearborn, Michigan, where the largest Arab-American community in the U.S. resides. Using material from the Sesame Street Egyptian co-production, *Alam Simsim*, *Sesame Neighborhood* will be rich with information about Arab culture, and designed to promote pride and awareness of viewers' heritage, to break down stereotypes, and to demonstrate the ways in which our world is interconnected. *Sesame Neighborhood* in Dearborn will serve as a model for the expansion of *Sesame Neighborhood* to other Arab-American neighborhoods in the United States. Eventually, it will be expanded to other ethnic communities in the United States, where we can combine international co-productions to serve, for example, the Chinese-American population in San Francisco and the Polish-American population in Chicago.

- Also in development is a media literacy television program entitled, *Crumb Snatchers*. The curriculum for this program came directly from the findings of our research on six to eleven year-olds.

IV. Dissemination

Results from the *View From the Middle* research study have been widely distributed and used. Since conducting the third phase of this study, the results have been presented at:

- **Press Forum**, February, 2003, Washington, D. C. Presentation of findings and panel discussion. Please see attached report.

- 2003 Biennial meeting of **the Society for Research in Child Development** (SRCD), April 2003, Tampa, Florida. Participation in panel titled *Listening and Responding to Children's Needs.* Presentation of findings and panel discussion.

- **PBS** Annual Meeting, June, 2003, Miami Fla. Presentation of findings followed by panel discussion.

- **Alliance for a Media Literate America** (AMLA) Annual meeting, June, 2003, Baltimore, Md. Presentation of findings followed by a panel discussion.

- **Middle Childhood Conference**, June, 2003, Washington, D. C. Poster session.

Results were also presented in the following book:

Bay, Willow. Talking to Your Kids in Tough Times: How to Answer Your Child's Questions About the World We Live In. New York: Warner Books, 2003.

V. Project Director's Opinion

The View From the Middle: Life through the Eyes of Children in Middle Childhood has proved to be a powerful research tool, providing an understanding of how children between the ages of six and eleven see the world around them. There are many important outcomes from this research as well as valuable "lessons learned".

In a time of relative peace and prosperity, children seemed more personally frightened than they were either immediately or shortly after 9/11. Could it be that Columbine, an event that happened in a school by children to children was more frightening than 9/11, a tragedy that occurred in an office building to adults?

Children seem to be surprisingly disturbed by news of "routine" violence in America. They feel invaded by grisly events that they do not choose to watch or learn about. They seem especially disturbed by crimes of which children are the victims or victims and perpetrators.

More importantly, when things are "normal", and adults, therefore, are not addressing children's fears, children between six and eleven years of age seem to feel most alone and helpless in their fear. Unlike "Code Orange" times, parents seem to be unaware of their children's anxieties. Kids feel assaulted by the onslaught of news and want both parents and adults, in general, to mediate on their behalf. However, children tend not to want to burden their parents with their fears or to admit to them.

Kid's worst fears might not be related to large scale events (which get adults to pay attention to their children) but to seemingly less significant threats that grown-ups tend to ignore. In a child's mind, the school yard bully is likened to the teenage perpetrators in Columbine.

In trying to cope with these problems, children cue into community, physical proximity of caring adults and intergenerational connections more than we may realize. **After 9/11, society seemed to address their concerns successfully. Yet when children absorb**

other crises that are often even more disturbing to them, we tend not to even notice.

As we navigate these troubled times, children are providing a clear message. They are comforted by having the awareness and the attention of adults. They are comforted by having a sense of their home as a safe haven. They are comforted when extended family, especially grandparents, are near-by, accessible and willing to talk, share their wisdom and listen.

We cannot assume that when adults are feeling safer, children are feeling safer as well. What sometimes become "invisible" to adults is horribly disturbing to children. We must continue to pursue this window to their world, looking at the issues of the day through their eyes.

VI. Organizational Structure

Susan Royer, Vice President of Education and Research, heads up a staff of 23. Susan reports directly to Sherrie Rollins Westin, Executive Vice President for Communications. She has been working at Sesame Workshop for almost five years. Please see Appendix G and H.

Sesame Workshop
Financial Report

VI. Budget Narrative

Beyond Kellogg's generous $150,000 grant, Sesame Workshop spent $61,123 in support of this project. Extremely committed to the study, the Workshop provided its own funds to cover the following unanticipated expenses. First, the field work for the Arab American children ran over due to the difficulty we had recruiting as explained in the "Unexpected Outcomes" section of this report. Second, we decided to recruit a focus group of slightly older children to vet our analysis and discuss the issues from their perspective. Last, we held a forum in Washington, D.C. which included several of these older children as well as a panel of academic experts.

Appendix A: Panelist Biographies

Moderator

Ellen Wartella, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Communication
Walter Cronkite Regents Chair in Communication
Mrs. Mary Gibbs Jones Centennial Chair in Communication
The University of Texas at Austin

Ellen Wartella, Ph.D., is the dean of the College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin, the largest and most comprehensive communication college in the country.

Under Dean Wartella's leadership, the College has become one of the most sought after UT Colleges among prospective students; the College's endowment has more than doubled; and College faculty, departments and programs have achieved national recognition for excellence. As a result, the College has earned a reputation for high academic standards, innovation in the use of technology, creativity across and within disciplines, and strong industry partnerships.

During her tenure as dean, the College of Communication has established numerous initiatives and programs, including the Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas; and the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation. Student enrollment and student academic performance in the College reflect the popularity and consistency of the programs. The undergraduate student population remains diverse with minority enrollment exceeding 25 percent. The College has also transformed its technology base, affording students the opportunity to use the latest technology in the classroom and in field projects.

In addition to her role as dean, Dr. Wartella is an active scholar with ties to higher education, the industry and public policy through her research on the effects of media on child development. She has written and edited several books on mass media effects on children and is the co-principal investigator on a five-year, multi-site research project titled *Children's Research initiative: Children's Digital Media Centers*, funded by the National Science Foundation. As a consultant to the Federal Communications Commission, Federal Trade Commission and Congressional investigations of children and television issues, she has been an advocate for better programming for children.

She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1977 and completed her post-doctoral research in developmental psychology in 1981 at the University of Kansas. She serves on numerous boards, including the Board on Children, Youth and Families, part of the National Academies of Sciences; the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health (chair); Sesame Workshop (formerly The Children's Television Workshop); the Center for Media Education; the Council of Better Business Bureaus; the National Advisory Committee of the Decade of Behavior initiative; and the Children's Advertising Review Unit.

Prior to becoming dean of the College of Communication at the University of Texas, Dr. Wartella was a University Scholar and Research Professor at the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She also taught in the Department of Communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara and in the Department of Communication at Ohio State University.

Panelists

Dr. Albert Brooks, Chairman
Department of Psychology, Howard University

Dr. Albert Roberts is the Chairman of the Department of Psychology at Howard University where he has been a member of the faculty since 1971. He specializes in Developmental Psychology and consults in the area of Child Development. He is a member of the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Black Psychologists, the National Black Child Development Institute and the Society for Research in Child Development. He was a consulting editor for the *Journal of Educational Psychology* and is a published author of many articles and reports on child development focusing particularly on elementary school age children. Dr. Roberts earned his doctorate and master's degree in psychology at Emory University. He also holds a B.S. degree in Elementary Education from Coppin State College in Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. Nora Alarifi Pharaon
Gramercy Park Counseling Center

Nora Alarifi Pharaon is a licensed psychologist at the Gramercy Park Counseling Center, where she provides individual, couple, and group therapy and performs psychological evaluations for bilingual adults, adolescents, and children. As a Senior Consulting Psychologist at the Arab American Family Support Center in Brooklyn, NY, Dr. Pharaon provides psychological services to individuals and families, both onsite and off site.

Dr. Pharaon is a United Nations NGO representative of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI). She is a consulting psychologist at Pharon Consulting Group, in Fort Lee, NJ, which provides consultation services to various organizations in the Middle East and the Gulf region. Dr. Pharaon travels extensively to the Middle East, where she runs self- development workshops for women's groups in Saudi Arabia, as well as her ongoing workshops and seminars for members of the Arab American community in Brooklyn.

Dr. Pharaon earned her doctorate and master's degree in psychology at Columbia University and also holds a master's degree in Education from the American University of Beirut in Lebanon.

Dr. Woodie Kessel
Deputy Director for Medical and Health Science
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Dr. Kessel's expertise integrates the disciplines of engineering, pediatrics, primary care, research, and public health, with first-hand community-based experience. Dr. Kessel is an Assistant Surgeon General in the United States Public Health Service. He has been an advisor on child health matters to White House officials in five administrations, including serving eight Secretaries and six Surgeon Generals in The Department of Health and Human Services directly. Dr. Kessel is presently on special assignment serving as the Senior Child Health Science Advisor in the Office of the Secretary and Co-Director of the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children. Dr. Kessel earned his Master of Public Health from the School of Hygiene and Public Health at the Johns Hopkins University, his Doctor of Medicine from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Drexel University.

Dr. Kyle Pruett
Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry and Nursing
Yale Child Study Center and School of Medicine

Kyle Pruett, M.D. is Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Center and School of Medicine. He is also Past President of Zero to Three: The National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, the nation's leading think tank, research and policy center on children's development in the first three years of life. His work has been profiled on Nova, PBS, ABC's 20/20, NPR and in the nation's major newspapers.

In 1995, he served as a consultant to Vice President Gore in drafting the new federal initiative on fatherhood. He is on the advisory council on Excellence in Children's Media for the Annenberg Public Policy Center and the editorial board of *Child Magazine, Good Housekeeping, Parents'* and the *Journal for Medicine in the Performing Arts*. He will represent the US at the First International Summit on the Father and Child, sponsored by the United Nations.

Dr. Pruett is the author of four books, dozens of articles and over fifty scientific publications while maintaining a private practice in child and family psychiatry. His book *The Nurturing Father* won the American Health Book Award. His book *Me Myself and I, How Children Build Their Sense of Self* received the National Association of Parenting Publications Award and was picked by Child Magazine as one of the "Ten Best Parenting Books of 1999." His most recent book is *Fatherneed: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*. He has written regular columns for *Good Housekeeping* and family education.com.

He has hosted his own series on Lifetime called "Your Child Six to Twelve with Dr. Kyle Pruett" and has appeared on most major television and radio shows in the U.S. He has appeared regularly on Good Morning America, NBC Dateline, and the ABC News. He currently hosts the Modern Parent series for the Sterling Digital/Comcast Cable.

Dr. Pruett graduated from Yale University where he received the Sheldon Prize for "Outstanding Contributions to the Humanities at Yale."

ATTACHMENT B

Modeling Life Skills on *Sesame Street*: A Response to September 11th

Accepted in "Televizion"

Rosemarie T. Truglio, Jennifer A. Kotler, David I. Cohen, & Anna Housley-Juster

Sesame Workshop

From its inception, *Sesame Street* has taught children important lessons that extend beyond letters and numbers. The producers, writers, and educators who work on *Sesame Street* have consistently integrated cognitive, social, and emotional content into all of its stories and segments. Throughout the years Sesame Street has focused on a variety of social and societal issues such as love, marriage, pregnancy, death, race relations, and natural disasters. At the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, 46 of the 50 episodes of the season were written. In response to the events of September 11th, *Sesame Street* produced the final four shows of the season to help preschoolers cope with emotional issues and ultimately, teach them strategies to help them become more resilient. Because *Sesame Street* has a history of addressing sensitive topics, it was not unusual for us to respond to this tragic event. However, the magnitude and meaning of the event brought new challenges regarding ways to address the well-being and safety of young children. The socio-emotional ramifications of that day varied depending on the degree to which children were exposed to the events. Some children lost loved ones in the attack; others feared for their own safety; and yet others may have faced exclusion based on their ethnicity or religious beliefs. The four programs that were created focused on 1) cultural diversity and inclusion, 2) coping with loss, 3) dealing with a bully, and 4) appreciation of firefighters.

The present study analyzed children's comprehension of and learning from three of the four episodes. We did not study children's response to the firefighter episode. In the firefighter episode, a grease fire broke out while Elmo was dining in Hooper's Store. Elmo was very frightened. To help Elmo overcome his fear, a firefighter invited him to the firehouse where Elmo learned all about firefighters and the work that they do. While the episode did focus on a strategy for coping with an emotionally disturbing event, the strategy was employed by an adult (the firefighter) who provided Elmo with information. For the present study, we were interested in focusing on whether children could be taught strategies that they themselves would be able to

utilize given a particularly stressful and emotional situation. Therefore, we sought to examine how children might integrate such strategies into their own schemata given related circumstances.

Participants were 107 children from a mixed-income preschool in a suburban area of New Jersey. The group was 63% White, 15% Latino, 12% African-American, and 10% Other. Children were randomly assigned to view one of three episodes (Inclusion, Loss, Bullying). Children were interviewed in three phases. First, there was a pretest to assess children's baseline knowledge of ways to handle conflict or stressful situations similar to those presented in the *Sesame Street* stories (Pretest/Baseline). Second, immediately after viewing, children were asked questions about their comprehension of the stories, as well as questions about the application of particular strategies given a conflict or stressful situation (Post-viewing). Finally, one week after viewing, children were asked the same comprehension and application questions that they were asked immediately after viewing to assess whether there were long-lasting effects of viewing (One week post-viewing). There were 90 children who participated in all three phases (16% attrition). The 17 children who did not participate in all three waves were not included in the analyses.

Procedure

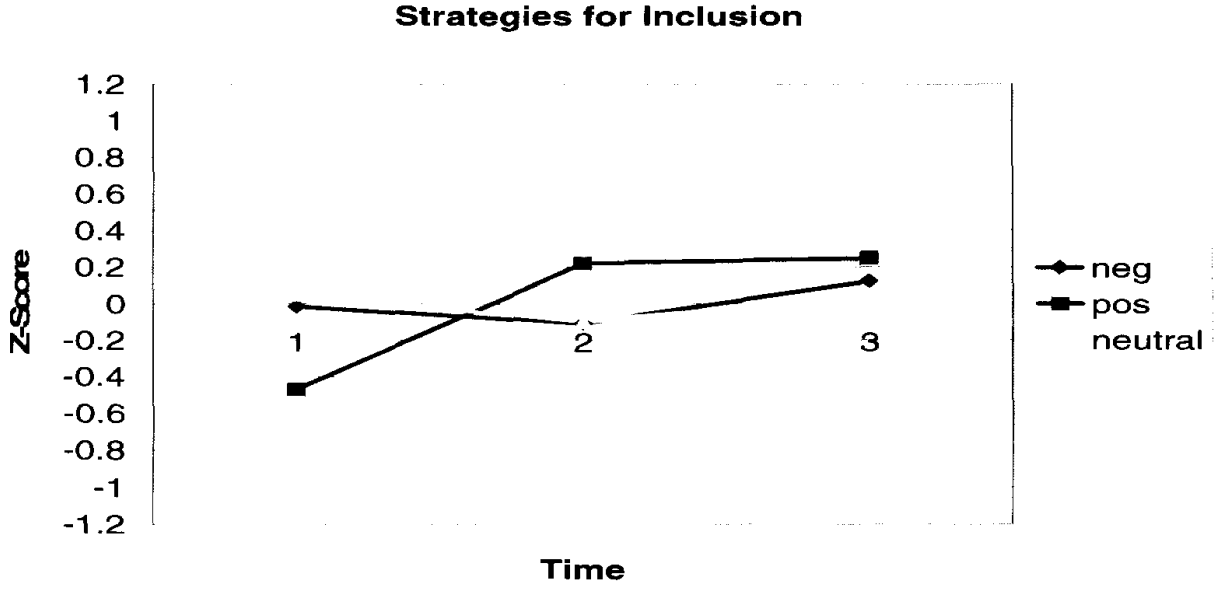
Because comprehension is a necessary pre-requisite for understanding application, for each of the three scenarios (inclusion, coping with loss, and dealing with a bully) children were first asked questions that assessed what they understood about the problem, strategy, and solution demonstrated in the episodes. We then assessed children's ability to apply the strategies learned by asking them to provide verbal and behavioral strategies that they would use themselves and advise to others if confronted with similar situations. There were four questions asked to illicit such responses (e.g. what would you say, what would you do, what would you tell a friend to say, what would you tell a friend to do given the three scenarios). Responses to each question were coded as a) positive (prosocial techniques modeled in the episode), b) negative (antisocial techniques), and c) neutral (generally prosocial but not modeled on *Sesame Street* as effective solutions).

Children's responses within each question by each type of response were then summed across the four questions, and standardized within type across time, to yield comparable scores across the different types of responses. Scores were standardized across time to allow for an analysis of change across time.

Inclusion/Cultural Awareness

Comprehension. In the inclusion/cultural awareness episode, Big Bird's pen pal, Gulliver, visits *Sesame Street.* Big Bird is looking forward to introducing Gulliver to Snuffy. Big Bird is dismayed to discover that Gulliver refuses to play with anyone who is not a bird. The conflict ends with Big Bird telling Gulliver "if you don't want to play with my friend, then I don't want to play with you!" Gulliver realizes the error of his ways, and finally they all sing and play together. Gulliver then comes to terms with the fact that differences can be wonderful. Comprehension was strong; almost all of the kids knew the problem was that Gulliver did not want to play with Big Bird's other friends (Post-viewing: 87%, One week post-viewing: 72%). About 1/2 knew that Gulliver only wanted to play with birds (Post-viewing: 46%, One week post-viewing: 53%). Many also reported the resolution that they all played and/or sang together (Post-viewing: 56%, One week post-viewing: 55%). About a quarter of the children recalled Big Bird saying "If you don't want to play with my friend, then I don't want to play with you!" (Post-viewing: 28%, One week post-viewing: 29%).

Application: In order to assess change over time in use of strategies, children were asked: 1) If someone says they won't play with your friend, what would you do? 2) What would you say to the kid who won't play with your friend? 3) What are some things John can do to play with his friend with Philip too? 4) What are some things John can say so they can all play together?



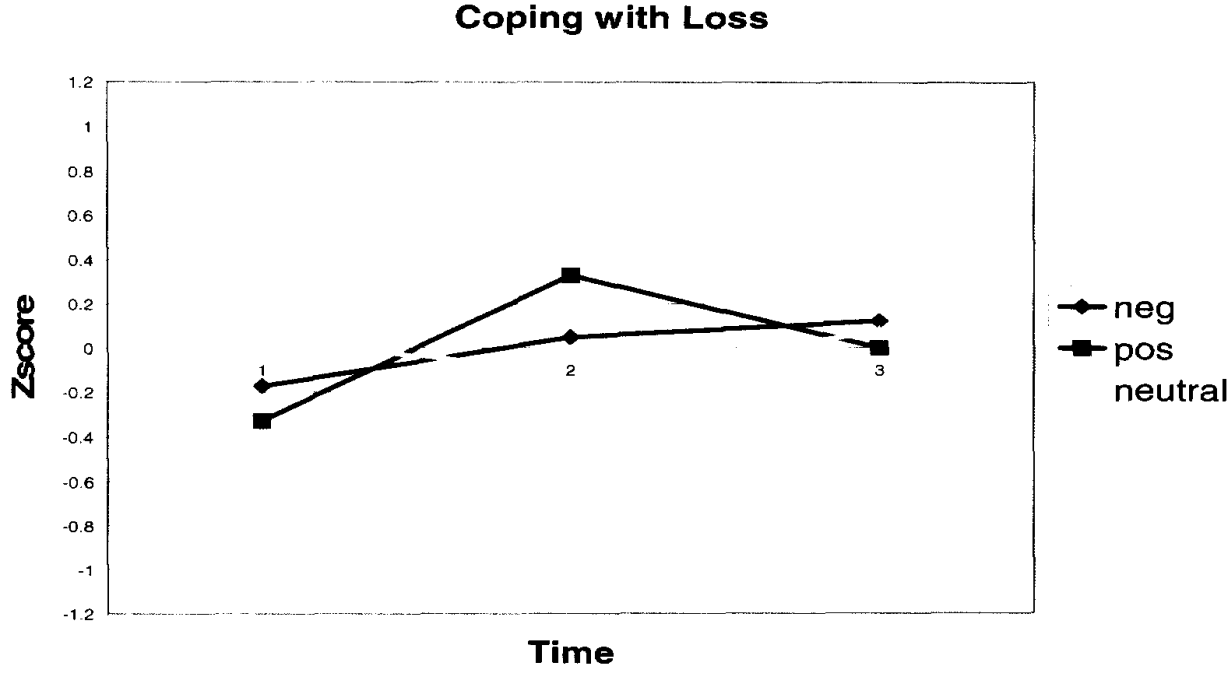
Children's responses to the questions were coded as: NEGATIVE (-1) : any negative behavior, including hitting, walking/running away, getting away from them, do something else such as play with a different friend or play with a toy; NEUTRAL (0): any verbal comment such as I'll work on it, think about it; get an adult; tell on them, put on a black shirt so we can all play, say please, that's not nice/not fair, be nice/good, say no, I don't like you; POSITIVE (1): ask if they can all play together; we can all play/get along/be friends, you can play with us, it doesn't matter what you wear, ask if we can all play together, if you don't want to play with him/her, I don't want to play with you, don't play with me.

Sesame Street clearly provided children with strategies that they did not know to use before viewing. Positive strategies were significantly lower at baseline than neutral or negative strategies. However, there was a significant increase in positive strategies from baseline to post-viewing that maintained through the one week post-viewing. Neutral and negative strategy types were not significantly different from one another at baseline and there were no changes over time in such strategies over time.

Coping with Loss

Comprehension. In another episode Big Bird copes with the loss of his "pet" turtle, Seymour, when it wanders back to its natural environment. Big Bird is sad, but, by talking with friends, realizes that the turtle is a wild animal and has probably returned to his real home. Gina is particularly kind and helpful and models prosocial coping skills by giving Big Bird a hug, asking him to tell a story about the pet, and by validating his feelings and using comforting words (e.g. "I know you loved your pet"). Comprehension was very strong. All of the children (100%) reported that this was a story where Big Bird lost his turtle both immediately after viewing and one week later. Most children reported things that Big Bird liked about Seymour (e.g., got food for him, took care of him, counted his spots, etc) (Post-viewing: 82%, One week post-viewing: 71%). Most were able to identify the way that Big Bird felt when he lost his turtle was "sad." (Post-viewing: 94%, One week post-viewing: 80%). The majority of children also reported something that Gina did to make Big Bird feel better such as gave him a hug, told a story, explained that he's a wild animal (Post-viewing: 85%, One week post-viewing: 96%). The increase from post-viewing to One week post-viewing is largely explained by the increase in the number of children who cited "hug" as a strategy. It is likely that giving someone a hug when someone is sad is a strategy children already knew.

Application: In order to assess their understanding of the use of strategies, children were asked: 1) If your friend lost something and can't get it back, what would you do to help? ; 2) What would you say to make him/her feel better? 3) Anthony's friend Tom came over to make Anthony feel better when Anthony lost something. What can Tom do to make Anthony feel better? 4) What can Tom say to make Anthony feel better?



Children's responses to the four questions were coded as: NEGATIVE (-1) : leave them alone, you can get a new/another cat, find something else to play with, you can play with my cat, imagine you have a cat; NEUTRAL (0) : I'll find it, I'll help find it, get adult, buy a new cat, share my cat, give them a present or a card, I'll play with them, sing songs, share my toys, come out to dinner with me, they'll come to my house, say it's okay, don't worry, it'll be alright, don't be sad, don't cry, feel better, I love you; POSITIVE (1) : I'll give them a hug, hug them, give them a kiss, stay with them, comforting friend by hugging or talking about loss, say sorry, what's wrong, tell me about your cat, talk to them about it, talk to them, tell them a story about the cat, say "I know you loved your cat."

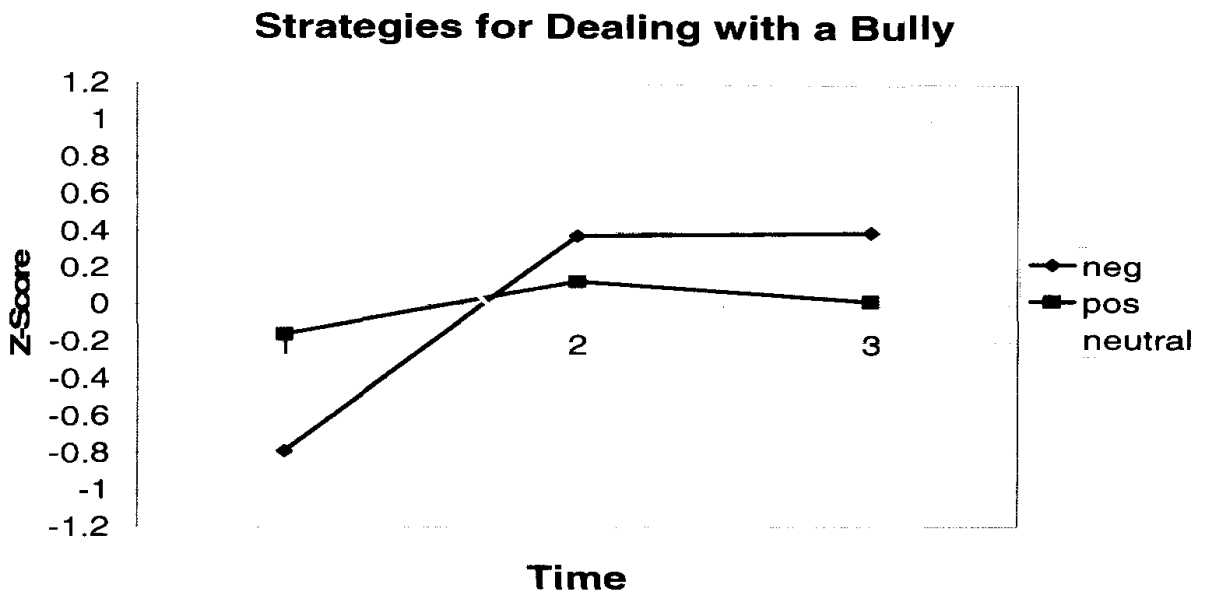
There was an increase in positive coping strategies from baseline to post-viewing. At the one week follow-up, however, the level of positive responses were similar to what they were at pretest. In other words, children learned strategies in the short-term but forgot them a week later. It

is likely that children's strategies returned to baseline because there was likely no opportunity to practice the strategies learned during the week in between post-viewing and one week post-viewing. There were no changes over time for any of the other strategy types. There were also no differences within time across strategies types.

Bullying

Comprehension. In the episode that focused on bullying, Telly is excited when his cousin Izzy comes to visit. But Izzy is a bully and takes Telly's triangle collection and refuses to share. Telly becomes frustrated and upset. Telly then talks to Gordon who helps Izzy understand Telly's point of view. The strategies modeled were asking an adult for help, using the language: that's my toy, give it back to me now and having the adult ask the bully how he would feel if someone took something of his. Comprehension scores indicated that almost all of the kids knew that the problem was that Izzy didn't want to share the triangles. (Post-viewing: 97%, One week post-viewing: 75%). Many children were also able to name strategies that Telly used to get his triangles back. (Post-viewing: 91%, One week post-viewing: 73%). When asked specifically what Gordon said Telly should do, more than half reported that he should ask for it back. Post-viewing: 75%, One week post-viewing: 59%). Most kids reported that Gordon took Izzy's hat as a way of helping Telly get his triangles back. (Post-viewing: 72%, One week post-viewing: 41%). Some could also report what Gordon said to Izzy (i.e., how would you feel if someone took your hat and wouldn't give it back (Post-viewing: 38%, One week post-viewing: 31%).

Application: To assess whether children could transfer the strategies learned in the bully episode to a novel situation. Children were asked what they would 1) do and 2) say if someone took their own toy away and wouldn't give it back. They were then told a story about how a boy named "Jim" takes "Sam's" car away. The children were then asked 3) what can Sam do to get his car back as well as 4) what can Sam say to Jim to get his car back.



Children's responses to the questions were coded as: NEGATIVE (-1): any negative behavior, including hit them, grab, take something of theirs, negative verbal response; NEUTRAL (0): share, play with a different toy, positive verbal response such as that's not nice, that's not fair, no, please, thank you (but not able to say please give my toy back,) ask for it back (doesn't include specific words); POSITIVE (1): get an adult, I'll tell, or actual words that ask for it back such as that's my toy, give it back now.

Results suggest that at pretest, children reported more neutral strategies, followed by positive strategies, and finally negative strategies. We assume that because the children were in a structured daycare setting that they had frequent encounters with other children who wanted their things. We also assume that the children are taught socially appropriate ways of handling such conflict because they are in such a setting, which could explain the higher neutral and positive strategies at baseline. There were no changes in positive strategies offered across time, nor were there any significant changes from post-viewing to One week post-viewing for any of the strategy types. There was, however, a significant increase for negative strategies from pretest to post-viewing, and a significant decrease for neutral strategies from pretest to post-viewing. This last finding suggests that the episode encouraged children to use negative strategies in dealing with a bully.

Conclusion & Discussion

Each of the three episodes tried to teach children how to cope with emotional situations. The finding across all three programs suggest that children understood the difficult problems and the emotions involved in those situations. A major focus of *Sesame Street*'s core mission from its inception has been to deliver messages about inclusion and cultural appreciation. We have taught children to embrace differences, as well as to understand the similarities that connect all of us despite those differences. The inclusion episode clearly taught children new and positive strategies in dealing with those who want to exclude others. As preschool children are learning to categorize and classify, in-group/out-group types of conflicts and decisions become more frequent. We were encouraged by the finding that it seems children learned from this episode in the short-term and long-term.

Similarly, children learned new and positive strategies about dealing with loss from the episode about Big Bird's turtle, but they did not retain these new strategies learned over time. The loss episode, though clearly understood, focused on a hopefully infrequent occurrence in children's lives. Though children learned new strategies right after viewing, it is likely that there was no opportunities for them to practice their newly learned strategy during the week.

The results of the bully episode were not as positive. While it did teach children new strategies, had an opposite effect to what was intended. In fact, we wound up inadvertently validating hitting. In trying to understand why this had occurred, we re-examined the episode. The episode showed Telly trying different techniques to get the triangles back from Izzy to no avail. Telly becomes so frustrated that he says that he feels like hitting Izzy. Gordon tells Telly to think about what would happen if he were to hit Izzy. Telly then imagines that he would hit Izzy, Izzy would hit Telly back, and they would both be hurt and end up in the hospital. Even while both of them are lying in the hospital beds, Izzy still has the triangles. Clearly, Telly realizes, hitting would not be a useful strategy.

While it may have been clear to Telly that hitting would not be appropriate, there was likely something very entertaining and memorable about this thought sequence. There was suspenseful music in the background and Telly (consistent with his personality) acted in an over-the-top anxious and dramatic way about the dilemma. Given Telly's performance, children may have perceived these scenes as humorous, thus counteracting the message we intended to portray.

The intent of the show, however, was to model forethought and show the negative consequences of violence or anti-social behavior, but perhaps the highly visual and interesting footage of Telly's thought process interfered with children's understanding of the main message, which was, that violence is NOT a solution.

As a result of these research findings, the producers of *Sesame Street* decided to no longer air this episode. The decision to shelve the bullying episode was not a drastic measure or a diversion from tradition. At *Sesame Street*, each episode serves as an experiment and through research with children we assess whether programs are teaching the lessons we sought to teach. For example, in 1992 we created a story to help children cope with the rising rates of divorce. The episode was designed to convey the information that parents love their children even when the parents get divorced. The research on that program indicated that, in fact, children were more confused by the message than comforted by it. Therefore, the episode was never aired.

In conclusion, the findings across all three episodes suggest that children understand conflicts, solutions and emotions involved in the scenarios that were created in response to living in a post 9-11 world. Indeed children can learn important prosocial strategies from television and use these modeled strategies in their own lives if faced with a similar situation. Moreover, if they have opportunities to practice, they will retain such strategies over time.

Since its inception, *Sesame Street* has remained committed to children. We rise to the challenges of today's world and develop innovative ways to help children learn and grow. Within a community of fun, loveable and curious Muppets and nurturing racially diverse human characters, *Sesame Street* will continue to address socially important and relevant issues that help contribute to the well-being of all children.